DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 262 518 EC 180 926

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TITLE Curricula for the Gifted and Talented. 1985 Digest.
INSTITUTION ERIC Clearinghouse on Handicapped and Gifted Children, Reston, Va.
SPONS AGENCY National Inst. of Education (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 85
CONTRACT 400-84-0010
NOTE 3p.
AVAILABLE FROM ERIC Clearinghouse on Handicapped and Gifted Children, 1920 Association Dr., Reston, VA 22091 (one free copy).
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055) -- Information Analyses - ERIC Information Analysis Products (071)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Curriculum Development; *Educational Needs; Elementary Secondary Education; *Gifted; Talent
IDENTIFIERS ERIC Digests

ABSTRACT

The digest examines issues related to curricula for gifted and talented students. Schools should be prepared to meet the special needs of this population in a variety of ways, including identifying their learning needs, making equipment and resources available, providing for flexible progression through learning experiences and grades, and monitoring the extent to which curriculum goals and objectives are accomplished and the needs of pupils met. Curriculum should meet a variety of student needs, including association with intellectual peers; access ideas, persons, and environments that lead to creative and productive thought; and experiences of support from guidance personnel. Curriculum modifications may include special learner objectives and classroom dialogue for intellectually gifted students. Modifications in specific academic categories may be accomplished with subject matter specialists at school district and county levels. A brief resource listing concludes the digest. (CL)

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1985
DIGEST

CURRICULA FOR THE GIFTED AND TALENTED

A curriculum may be thought of as a plan, a course of study, a series of experiences, and/or a process for acquiring knowledge, developing skills, forming attitudes, and structuring and internalizing a system of values. Ideally, it is a means for the optimum development of individuals and of the society in which they live. An appropriate curricula for the gifted and talented will help develop extraordinary intellectual, academic, leadership, creative, and visual and performing arts abilities and will foster attitudes and values that will help transform society.

What Must a School Be Prepared to Do in Order to Meet the Special Needs of the Gifted and Talented?

- Identify the learning needs of student.
- Determine what knowledge, higher-intellectual and creative skills, communication skills, attitudes, and values are to be fostered.
- Define the tasks to be performed by teachers and resource persons who have been selected because they empathize with gifted students, are willing to serve as mentors and models, are able to orchestrate optimum development of a student's intelligence, and can fire the student's imagination and desire to achieve to the fullest.
- Provide for flexible involvement in alternative learning environments such as acceleration programs, enrichment programs, independent study, and self-contained classes.
- Provide for flexible progression through knowledge and skill acquisition, learning experiences, and grades.
- Have available equipment and resources needed for such things as simulations, self-assessments, knowledge and skill acquisition, and word processing.
- Provide a life-oriented guidance and counseling program that allows students to compare their abilities and personalities with profiles of individuals who are highly successful in careers requiring extraordinary problem-solving, creative, leadership, or visual and performing arts abilities.
- Provide an orientation to learning where students can identify and recommend ways of dealing with the problems of tomorrow, develop a commitment to improving the human condition, and act as a change agent in the transformation of society toward a better world.
- Provide many and varied resources including persons, learning situations, equipment donated or borrowed from businesses and industries, Chambers of Commerce, service clubs, and institutions of higher education.
- Monitor and evaluate the extent to which curriculum goals and objectives are accomplished and the needs of pupils met. These should be reflected in the growth of knowledge and skills, improvement in attitudes and values, and the creation of significant products.

What Needs of the Gifted and Talented Can Be Met Through the Curriculum?

Particular needs of gifted and talented students include:

- Being valued by age-mates, teachers, and parents as a person and not just an individual with high ability or talent.
- Associating with intellectual peers.
- Believing that it is normal to be different.
- Having an optimistic and future-oriented view of life and of one's self-fulfilling place in the home, occupation, and society.
- Having access to ideas, persons, and environments which lead to highly creative and productive thought.
- Experiencing open as well as structured learning situations. Having time to ponder, imagine, and create.
- Having opportunities to experience and gain competence in various kinds of thinking: rational, metaphoric, critical, and creative.
- Experiencing placement in one or more of the following program options: acceleration, enrichment, independent study, services to underachieving gifted and talented pupils, services to pupils with various cultural and linguistic backgrounds, cluster grouping in regular classes, "pull-out" opportunities from regular classes, and special classes for part or most of the school day.
- Experiencing the support of guidance personnel, including teachers, who help the student develop sensitivity and responsibility to others, a commitment to constructive ethical values, self-generating problem-solving abilities, and a realistic, healthy self-concept.

In addition, there are particular needs of economically disadvantaged, culturally and linguistically diverse, physically and emotionally handicapped, underachieving, and highly gifted children. Individuals in each of these groups must be assessed to determine critical curriculum modifications which are necessary for optimum development.

What Curriculum Modifications Should Be Made for Gifted and Talented Students?

For the intellectually gifted, modifications would include special learner objectives, classroom dialogue, assignments, curriculum materials, examination questions, and reward systems for acquiring cognitive competencies such as those described in the *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: Cognitive Domain* (Bloom, 1956) and in J. P. Guilford's (1967) Structure of Intellect Model with curriculum materials produced by Mary Meeker (1974).

For the creative student, guidelines for curriculum modification may be found in creative problem-solving procedures described by Alex Osborn in *Applied Imagination*

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(1963), by E. Paul Torrance in *Guiding Creative Talent* (1962) and other publications by Frank Williams (1970, 1972), and by associates of the Creative Education Foundation (Noller, Parnes, & Biondi, 1976).

Modifications in specific-academic categories might be accomplished with the assistance of subject-matter curriculum specialists at school district and county levels, a result of committees representing state-wide or national Councils for the Social Sciences, of the Teachers of English, of the Teachers of Science, and of the Teachers of Mathematics. Mathematics Precocity, Academic Decathalons, and CEEB Advanced Placement Programs may also provide impetus for upgrading standards and revising curricula.

Students identified as having extraordinary leadership ability might be provided with opportunities to study great leaders and various styles of leadership. As part of this study, they might ferret out competencies of extraordinary leaders and identify or propose means for identifying these competencies which might then be modeled by the students.

Persons identified as gifted and talented in the visual and performing arts might be given experiences for enhancing visual and auditory discrimination, for encouraging imaging and the storing of images in the brain, for refining aesthetic appreciation, for documenting their realities, and for producing masterpieces of line and form, color and texture, sound, and theme.

By now it should be clear there is no standard curriculum for the gifted and talented. Optimum development of their capabilities and lives depends upon the sophistication and skill of school personnel in continually assessing capabilities and needs and in providing uniquely appropriate curricula, teaching strategies, and learning activities.

Where Can I Get More Information?

For help in acquiring necessary understanding and skills, write the consultant in gifted and talented education in your state department of education or write:

The Council for Exceptional Children
1920 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091-1589

RESOURCES

Bloom, B. S. (Ed.). (1956). *Taxonomy of educational objectives. Handbook 1: Cognitive domain.* New York: David McKay & Co.

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Clark, B. (1979). *Growing up gifted.* Columbus: Charles E. Merrill.

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Guilford, J. P. (1967). *The nature of human intelligence.* New York: McGraw Hill.

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Meeker, M. (1974). *The structure of the intellect, its interpretation and uses.* El Segundo, CA: SOI Institute.

Noller, R. B., Parnes, S. J., & Biondi, A. M. (1976). *Creative actionbook.* Buffalo, NY: Charles Scribner and Sons.

Osborn, A. F. (1963). *Applied imagination* (3rd ed.). New York: Charles Scribner and Sons.

Swassing, R. H. (1985). *Teaching gifted children and adolescents.* Columbus: Charles E. Merrill.

Torrance, E. P. (1962). *Guiding creative talent.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Williams, F. E. (1970). *Classroom ideas for encouraging thinking and feeling.* Buffalo, NY: D.O.K. Publishers.

Williams, F. E. (1972). *A total creativity program for individualizing and humanizing the learning process.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Educational Technology Publications.

OTHER RESOURCES

Available from The Council for Exceptional Children, Department 6502, 1920 Association Drive, Reston, VA 22091-1589 (703/620-3660).

Gifted and Talented Multimedia Kit. (Elementary level). Six filmstrips and cassettes and a manual. Identification, curriculum, and social and emotional development. No. 228. $180. CEC Member Price: $153.

Available from NEA Distribution Center, The Academic Building, Saw Mill Road, West Haven, CT 06516.

Educating the Gifted and Talented. (Secondary level). A "you can't lose" in-service training program. Books, monographs, three filmstrips and cassettes, duplication masters, leaflets for parents, and *A Guide and Plan for Conducting Gifted and Talented Workshops.* $147.40.

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The National Institute of Education

This publication was prepared with funding from the National Institute of Education, U.S. Department of Education, under contract no. NIE-400-84-0010. The opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of NIE or the Department of Education.